

## Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07  
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R 111312Z MAY 77  
FM AMEMBASSY HELSINKI  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1338  
INFO AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN  
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW  
AMEMBASSY OSLO  
AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM  
AMCONSUL GOTEBORG

C O N F I D E N T I A L HELSINKI 0957

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PINT, FI  
SUBJECT: NEW OPPOSITION CANDIDATE FOR FINNISH 1978 PRESIDENTIAL  
ELECTION

REF: HELSINKI 0497

1. SUMMARY: NOMINATION OF PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE BY  
SPLINTER RIGHTIST PARTY HAS PROVIDED SURPRISE ALTHOUGH NOT  
FORMIDABLE OPPONENT TO PRESIDENT KEKKONEN FOR 1978 ELECTION.  
END SUMMARY.

2. CONSTITUTIONAL PEOPLE'S PARTY, A RIGHT-WING SPLINTER  
GROUP WHICH HAS BUT ONE REPRESENTATIVE IN PARLIAMENT, HAS  
ANNOUNCED INTENTION TO NOMINATE DR. AHTI M. SALONEN AS ITS  
CANDIDATE IN 1978 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION. NOMINATION WILL  
BE FORMALLY MADE AT AUTUMN MEETING OF PARTY, WHICH HOPES  
SALONEN WILL ATTRACT DISSATISFIED FINNISH VOTERS FROM ALL  
PARTIES.

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3. SALONEN IS 66 YEARS OLD (10 YEARS YOUNGER THAN  
KEKKONEN) AND HAS BEEN MEMBER OF SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC  
PARTY (SDP) SINCE 1951. A RETIRED BUSINESSMAN AND  
MARKET ECONOMIST, HIS POLITICAL CREDENTIALS INCLUDE  
SERVICE AS POLITICAL SECRETARY TO PRIMIN FAGERHOLM  
IN 1958-59, MEMBERSHIP ON FINLAND'S 1959 UN DELEGATION,  
AND INVOLVEMENT IN UNSUCCESSFUL 1962 PRESIDENTIAL

CAMPAIGN OF OLAVI HONKA. DURING THAT ERA HE WAS UNDISPUTEDLY PRO-WESTERN AND OPPOSED TO KEKKONEN LINE AS UNNECESSARY AND DANGEROUS APPEASEMENT OF SOVIETS. IN OCTOBER 1976 SALONEN VISITED PEKING AS GUEST OF PRC.

4. EMERGENCE OF SALONEN BRINGS NUMBER OF PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES TO 3, IN ADDITION TO KEKKONEN HIMSELF. OTHERS ARE VEIKKO VENNAMO, CHAIRMAN OF RURAL PARTY AND EINO HAIKALA, CHAIRMAN OF FINNISH PEOPLE'S UNITY PARTY, A BREAK-AWAY FACTION FROM VENNAMO'S GROUP.

5. ANNOUNCEMENT OF SALONEN'S CANDIDACY HAS GENERATED CONSIDERABLE REACTION IN PRESS. COMMUNIST KANSAN UUTISET VOICED OPINION THAT CHINA WAS ENCOURAGING CANDIDACY AS ANTI-SOVIET MOVE. SALONEN HIMSELF READILY GRANTED INTERVIEW IN WHICH HE FRANKLY DISCUSSED HIS POSITION. HE ACCUSED KEKKONEN OF BECOMING AUTOCRATIC AND BONAPARTIST AND OF HAVING MISINTERPRETED THE PAASIKIVI LINE AND THE FCMA PACT WITH USSR. HE DID INDICATE HOWEVER THAT HE HIMSELF SUPPORTED THE PAASIKIVI LINE AND THE PACT. SALONEN TOLD PRESS HE SAW NO NATO THREAT FROM NORWAY AND SUSPECTED FINNISH SIDE OF LEAKING RECENT STORY REGARDING CONVERSATIONS BETWEEN KEKKONEN AND NORWEGIANS ON SUBJECT. SALONEN ALSO NOTED THAT HE HAS HAD NO CONTACT WITH CHINA OR THE CHINESE EXCEPT FOR ONE COURTESY VISIT TO THEIR EMBASSY ON HIS RETURN FROM CHINA.

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6. SDP SECRETARY SUNDQVIST STATED BELIEF THAT SALONEN SHOULD NOT REMAIN IN SDP AND PRESS REPORTS THAT PARTY IS MAKING EFFORT TO CANCEL HIS MEMBERSHIP. SALONEN HAS SAID HE WOULD NOT JOIN CONSTITUTIONAL PEOPLE'S PARTY.

7. COMMENT: EMERGENCE OF SALONEN PROVIDES MORE SERIOUS OPPOSITION CANDIDATE TO KEKKONEN THAN THE OTHER TWO WHO ANNOUNCED EARLIER. ALTHOUGH CANDIDACY SHOULD BE NO THREAT TO KEKKONEN, SALONEN IS AT LEAST ESTABLISHED ALTHOUGH MINOR FIGURE ON WHICH OPPOSITION TO PRESIDENT COULD CENTER. IT IS NOT CERTAIN THAT EITHER VENNAMO OR HAIKALA WILLING TO WITHDRAW IN FAVOR OF SALONEN AND DECISION OF CHRISTIAN PARTY ON ITS PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE STILL REMAINS TO BE TAKEN. HOWEVER, ENTRY OF RIGHT-WING SOCIAL DEMOCRAT TO RACE ASSURES FINNISH PROTEST VOTE WILL HAVE RESPECTABLE CANDIDATE AROUND WHICH TO COALESCE AND SHOULD ALLEVIATE EARLIER FEARS BY SOME THOUGHTFUL FINNS THAT ELECTION WITHOUT MEANINGFUL OPPOSITION WOULD PROVE EMBARRASSMENT FOR FINNISH

IMAGE AS REAL DEMOCRACY.  
HOUSTON

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## Message Attributes

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